

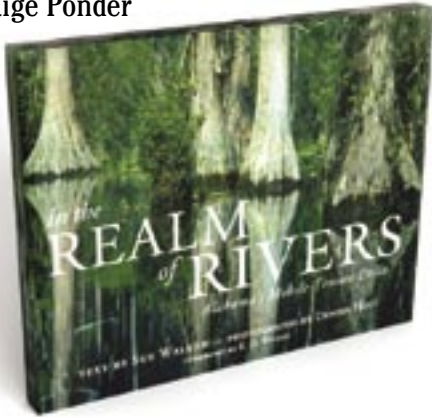
# The Bookend

*In the Realm of Rivers*

Text by Sue Walker

Photography by Dennis Holt

Review by Paige Ponder



## *Eye Candy For The Inquiring Mind*

Having the fine fortune of living here most of my life, I began exploring the Mobile-Tensaw Delta as a wee little pup. Roaming the delta at every chance, just meandering--no particular place to be.

Until now, I had neither seen, read nor heard of a comprehensive, visual or informative book on the subject, much less one so lovely; it is a work of art on our coffee table. Sure, information and images of the delta are abound, scattered about in scientific reports, geological surveys, articles and essays, but *In the Realm of Rivers* compiles the research and beauty in one exciting hardback.

Fresh on bookstore shelves, *In the Realm of Rivers* is the creation of acclaimed nature photographer, Dennis Holt, and Alabama Poet Laureate Sue Walker, known for her literary prowess. The subject is one of our nation's oldest and most valuable resources: the Mobile-Tensaw Delta. This paper and ink documentary of exquisite detail is the next best thing to being there. A treat for the senses: imagery, poetry and oral history combine to conjure the mystery of where we all need to be, at least once in a lifetime.

*In the Realm of Rivers* touches as many bases of this vast region as can be touched in 227 pages. Holt and Walker join forces to create this much-needed miracle, which shines with vivid photography and prose. It captures critters in their murky habitat and spins tales of its nuance only the savviest observer could render readable. The effort brings to fruition more than 20 years of photographic field-study, joined with a lifetime of geologic data softened by scientific and personal insight to reveal the vast importance of the ghostly region. It is a freeze-frame, modern view of the history of our culture's irreplaceable delta, nature's nursery and playground. And it exists in our own back yard. How lucky can we be?

This alluvial fan of swamps, bayous and rivers has begged for such a readable representation of its wonder and allure, forever unfolding. Now we have it: a sparkling gem, a heavy treasure to supplement our own explorations. For some, it will serve as an introduction to this rich healing refuge, which perhaps you were unaware lurked there sprawling beyond the causeway bridge. For those who have spent years exploring its acreage, it reveals more of what lurks under our feet as we walk the trails or paddle the waterways.

The forward written by my hero, Edward O. Wilson, is yet another testimony of how lucky we are the Alabama Coastal Foundation, among others, fostered this project.

Many will put the book down mid-way through and pack up their canoe. It has that inspirational effect. It puts you where the ground gushes beneath your feet. It puts you face to face with the owls, a gator baby, a bald eagle, a nesting osprey, and so many people who have called this region home forever. O, the stories they tell! Studs Terkel would be proud. Exploring the Mobile-Tensaw Delta by foot or boat may not be for everyone, but understanding its ecological and beautiful importance to our own existence is.

Thanks to *In the Realm of Rivers*, with its enticing photos by Holt, and Walker's elegant text, we can all enjoy this resource, our delta, in a way never before possible. You can get this wonderful book today at Morning Light Gallery in downtown Fairhope.

